VOLUME 31 / NO 6 DECEMBER 1980

FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER

"BLESSING OF THE ANIMALS" by LAUREN FORD

Since 1949 the purpose of Fellowship in Prayer is to promote the practice of prayer among all religious faiths whose fundamental belief is in God regardless of race, creed, and color, and whose tenets include the universal attributes, honesty, justice, and mercy, that thereby there may arise a closer relation to Almighty God and a deeper spirit of fellowship among mankind.

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THE PATH TO THE BRIGHTEST STAR WENT BY WAY OF THE DARK SIDE OF THE MOUNTAIN

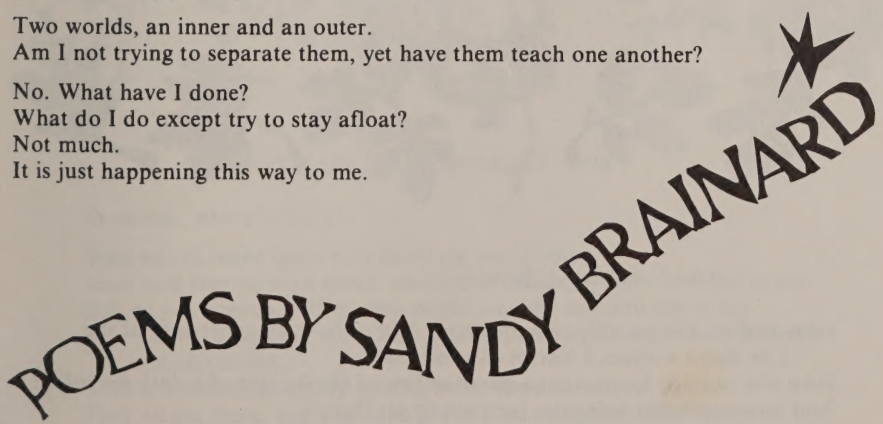
In The Mornings, I Turn Inward

In the mornings
When I turn inward to write,
I lose touch with the physical things of my life.
I feel whole and peaceful, but I do not see people very clearly.
I trip. Words are said through a cloud.

In the afternoons
When I am with people more,
My footing is better, and talking much easier.
But, inwardly, I lose my way.
Then I get angry at injustice.
Then I am angry at myself.

Two worlds, an inner and an outer.
Am I not trying to separate them, yet have them teach one another?

No. What have I done?
What do I do except try to stay afloat?
Not much.
It is just happening this way to me.



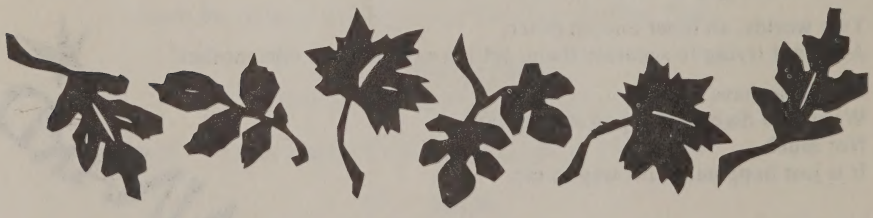
The Purpose Of Life

What is the purpose of life?
Look at your pain.
If you are hungry, your purpose is to find food.
My pain was that my life and all life seemed pointless to me.
So I sought meaning.

Now, just as these words emerge out of my heart,
I feel a life flowing from beyond myself through me
Showing me back to myself,
Showing me who I am and the way I should go.
In the flow of these very words
It is here for me.

Look yourself. Is it not true?
To find the meaning of your life and have it continuously renew you,
All that is necessary is to creatively fill up each moment with yourself
and the life that flows through you.

And, if you feel that this is not enough,
Then you don't know yourself very well yet.
But is not this lack of knowledge painful?



The Need for A Savior

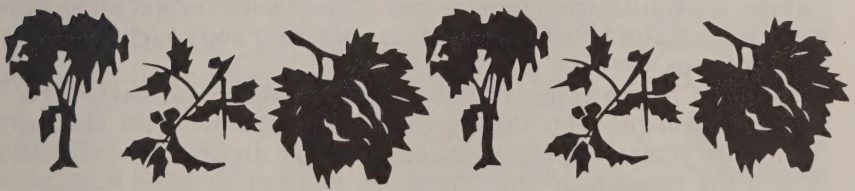
I don't think it is possible to understand God or have an experience of the
Life Spirit without a Savior of some kind
How else can one know what a paradise lies on the far side of a dark mountain
And how could one recognize the path to get there?

More Self-Righteousness

Am I a heathen because I believe that the Hindu God and the
Christian God are one and the same?

Why must religion be reduced to the level of an athletic competition
where you fight for the dominance of the home team?
What is right is what gets you yourself a vision of your true nature.
Trying to transform the world according to your beliefs is ego madness.

No, not again.
Look at the emotion in these words.
Surely I am a human with an ego problem too.



The Lights On The Doorway To God

In all this, where is Jesus?

With all the other lights that show the way home.
Jesus said that no man would reach God except by him, and that is true.
But, as you approach Him, you might take the opportunity to say
'Hello' to Buddha, Lao Tsu, Krishna, Moses, Muhammad, Zoroaster,
and all the rest.
Such a beautiful assembly that lights up the doorway to God.
They all are there, and you can't get to God except by all of them.

ECUMENICAL CHRISTIANITY: HOPE OF GLORY

by FRANCIS MERCHANT

WITH the advent of Protestantism, Christianity split up into a diversity of creeds and sects. Each group interpreted the teachings of Christ in accordance with its conception of the central message he conveyed. Some stressed the wrath of God; others, salvation by grace, and still others, the purification represented by baptism. And yet all professed their unshakable belief in the ministry of Christ and sought to follow in his footsteps.

If all Christian creeds adhered to the fundamental teachings of the New Testament, why should they not cooperate with each other instead of remaining separate and therefore divisive? Such questions led to the ecumenical movement, an attempt to bring together the various creeds of Christianity so that their united effort might bring more light into a world darkened by war and the secularization of society.

Inasmuch as theology and dogma have fostered division and dissension at a crucial period in the history of humanity, might it not be of value to search the Scriptures and try to create a framework that would serve as a basis for synthesis? Even though such an attempt be subject to criticism and find favor with few, the effort is worth making. Eventually, it is to be hoped, Christianity will become unified, and all endeavors, however imperfectly conceived, that have such unification in view deserve consideration.

ADORATION OF THE MAGI by Albrecht Dürer

The Hope of Glory

St Paul speaks of his ministry as a revealing of the "mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations." What, then, "is the riches of the glory of this mystery?" He answers, it "is Christ in you, the hope of glory."

This statement of what St Paul considereds the fundamental theme of Christianity has significant implications. The Christ is not simply an historical figure, but the essence with which he identified himself lives in every human being. Each one carries within himself the seeds of such grandeur and greatness.

The events that occurred in the life of Christ, then, are a prototypic summary of what each person must experience as he nurtures the seed of the spirit within him. In baptism, he purifies himself in the fountain of living waters and becomes a vessel fit to contain such golden fluids. At the transfiguration, the supernal light of the spirit illuminates the temperal tabernacle. At Gethsemane, he drinks the cup of sorrow and subordinates his will to the fulfillment of higher purpose. At the crucifixion, the form is destroyed and only the spirit remains—and the material self becomes merged with the spiritual self. But the crucifixion is the prelude to the resurrection. Such are the stages of unfoldment as each individual evolves the Christian within.

This is the drama enacted by every striving soul that journeys onward from outer darkness to the eternal house of light.

Unfoldments

Purification. The spiritual path is not traversed at a single bound. The ideal must be livingly manifested, and faith made firm by trial. The first step is spiritual commmitment, followed by baptism.

The dirt that accumulates on the body must be periodically washed away. Even so must a striving soul cleanse the emotions and lave the mind. Baptism is an indication of commitment and a willingness to undertake the task of purification.

Transfiguration. No sooner does a person make a commitment and become a vessel of light than he is assailed by opposing forces. The house of integrity that he seeks to build is buffeted on all sides. The rains descend; the floods come; the winds blow; the storms beat down.

Temptations arise that require the making of significant decisions. Jesus, in the wilderness was tempted by the devil, representative of natural inclinations that favor self-aggrandizement.

"If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." That is, use spiritual power for material gain. Prove that your inner achievements are outwardly profitable and enriching.

The devil then set Jesus on the pinnacle of a temple. "If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down; for it is written, He shall give His angels

charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone." In other words, perform a miracle to demonstrate that you have superior powers. Prove by tangible phenomena that you hold the keys of the Kingdom. Perform wonders to show that the way of the spirit is materially advantageous.

The third temptation concerns the desire for power. Taking Jesus to the top of a mountain, the devil showed him the kingdoms of the world. "All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." Unlimited power is offered to Jesus if he will but turn aside from his chosen path and pay homage to worldly values. Instead of seeking inner riches, he is asked to seek outer possessions.

In this fashion the committed soul is tempted—tempted to turn spiritual striving into selfish profit, to place emphasis on glamorous phenomena, to reach for power and possessions. As he follows the star of his vision, he finds himself in danger of wandering in byways and falling into quagmires.

Renunciation. "Strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." On the other hand, "wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat." Two paths are indicated—one that is traveled by many, and the other, by few. Those who go in at the wide gate are lured by glittering promises of self-aggrandizement. They brook no discipline and take umbrage at the thought of sacrifice.

The strait gate is so narrow that no man may take much with him as he passes through. Upon his shoulders, however, he bears the cross of his limitations, the unlit darkness in his nature. It is essential that he take up this burden. "Whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple."

Passage through the strait gate requires rejection of impediments that burden the wayfaring soul even more than does the cross. When a certain man asked what he should do to "inherit eternal life," he was told to give up his possessions. Sadly, he refused. Jesus commented, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God." Renunciation is a fundamental requisite to pass through the strait gate.

In the Garden of Gethsemane—a significant contrast to the Garden of Eden—Jesus drinks the cup of bitterness that every man must drain. Those whom he sought to help and serve had rejected him. In a time the people would plead for the release of a known murderer and call for the crucifixion of Jesus. Even the disciples drowsed in torpid sleep. The mission of salvation, begun but a few years previously, was to be cut short.

Could Jesus have escaped and saved himself from death? No doubt he could have done so, but in Gethsemane he became aware of a higher will, a purpose that had not heretofore been revealed. Relying

on this greater intention, he prayed, "O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me except I drink it, thy will be done." He drank the bitter cup even though it brought crucifixion and death in its wake. His own will was thus brought into harmony with a greater purpose.

Man ascribes his own meaning to his appearance on this material plane, but what is the intention of the powers that placed him where he finds himself? Two expressions of the will are thus indicated—the limited will of the individual and the universal one that sees the end from the beginning and fulfills purposes beyond human reckoning or imagining. To bring these two perspectives into conformity requires a subordination of the lesser to the greater. As Tennyson put it, "Our wills are ours to make thine."

Many persons, securely anchored in self-will, insist on following their own assertive inclinations. From such a predisposition much grief flows. Again and again they are broken on the sharp crags of harsh experience until they learn to recognize and conform to a superior purpose. Who loses his self-centered, dark will prepares himself to accept a more inclusive, lighted purpose. "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it, and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it."

Crucifixion. Every disciple, said Jesus, should "take up his cross daily." This counsel is metaphorical, yet Jesus himself suffered physical crucifixion. The abstract conception assumed a literal significance.

The horizontal component of the cross is wholly dependent on the vertical, or metaphysically, the life of service is tied to the aspiration that moves from earth to heaven. The upward-thrusting aspect is primary. To take up the cross, then, may signify the nourishing of the inner life of aspiration and the manifesting of loving service outwardly.

"I die daily," writes St Paul, indicating a persevering attempt to diminish one part of himself in order to augment another. Unexercised virtues perish by attrition. "As we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." Each day we strengthen or weaken one or the other. To which part does a man die? The man of earth is in contention with the man of spirit—an inner conflict that must be resolved one way or the other. "If a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand." To resolve that division wisely is the major task presented to every human being. The phasing out of the earthly element involves self-abnegation and, in a sense, crucifixion.

A form must adjust itself to the expanding life that indwells it, and so must the body change as the light of the soul increases. The process can be painful, but it is accompanied by growth in awareness. The other aspect of crucifixion is the augmentation of the inner light. Crucifixion inevitably leads to resurrection—the resurrection of the celestial being that has for so long been imprisoned in the tabernacle of the form.

(continued on page 28)

WHAT is there about this Jesus that seems strange to us? Here we shall be occupied first of all only with a single, but admittedly basic feature of his nature. Jesus was a human being, a fact which has always been more or less clearly asserted in Christendom. But there has not been the same readiness to admit that Jesus was a Jewish human being, a genuine Jew. And for that very reason, he was only too often a stranger to both Christians *and* Jews.

JESUS THE JEW

JESUS was a Jew, a member of this small, poor, politically powerless nation living at the periphery of the Roman Empire. He was active among Jews and for Jews. His mother Mary, his father Joseph, his family, his followers were Jews. His name was Jewish. His Bible, his worship, his prayers were Jewish. In the situation at that time he could not have thought of any proclamation among the Gentiles. His message was for the Jewish people, but for this people in its entirety without any exception.

From this basic fact we can conclude without more ado that without Judaism there would be no Christianity. The Bible of the early Christians was the Old Testament. The New Testament Scriptures became part of the Bible only by being appended to the Old. The Gospel of Jesus Christ everywhere quite consciously presupposes the Torah and the Prophets. The Christians too hold that the same God of judgment and grace speaks in both Testaments. . . . It is not with Buddhism, Hinduism and Confucianism, not even with Islam despite its influence there, but only with Judaism that Christianity has this unique relationship: a relationship of origin, resulting in numerous common structures and values.

—From ON BEING A CHRISTIAN by Hans Küng
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Some Memories of Hanukkah

by Isobel Aronin

WHAT can I tell you about Hanukkah? I have grown away; I do not celebrate it now. My memories of childhood bring me back to a dining-room table with candles on it, while my brother and I sing out of tune the Hebrew song "Ma'oz Zur." Outside, the snowflakes flutter, and my mother—with her sweet, warm smell fresh from the kitchen—piles the table high with raisin cookies and apple pancakes. My father gives us wine, the sugary dark concoction that even to this day has spoiled my palate for more sophisticated vintages.

Perhaps it was not like that. I do not know. Memories may not be true. My beautiful mother is dead. My brother is in Africa. I have differences with my father. When we meet, we watch each other carefully as enemies do.

My Hebrew teacher, who came to our house once a week, taught us the tale of the courageous Judah Maccabee. In the second century B.C.E., he fought the despotic Syrian King Antiochus IV, who had tried to extinguish all other religions but the Greek. Judah hid out in the hills with a band of guerrilla followers. As his *pièce de rèsistance* he captured the Temple of Zeus at Jerusalem and rededicated it to its original God, the Lord of Israel (hence the name Hanukkah, which means "dedication"). Celebrations followed, and the Maccabees searched for holy oil to light the festive candles. They found one cruse with enough oil to last one day. But a miracle occurred. The oil burned for eight days instead of one. In honor of the miracle, Jews light the

eight-branched candlestick called the Menorah on every Hanukkah.

There are many early accounts of the Maccabean revolt, but few which mention the miracle. The Talmud, which is a collection of oral Jewish law, does. Josephus, the first-century historian, writes of the "Feast of Lights," but only because lights symbolize liberation. The first two Books of the Maccabees tell of various martyrdoms suffered during the course of the revolt. Hannah and her seven sons chose to be roasted to death rather than deny their God. Eleazer, an old man of ninety, was killed for refusing to eat forbidden food. Judah's father, Mattathias, killed a Greek officer and an apostate Jew, and though escaping himself, saw several of his sons killed.

Other contemporary accounts give historical background for the internal as well as the external struggles. Greek civilization was at its prime. People considered Euclidean geometry and Ptolemaic astronomy the high points of man's knowledge. Therefore many Jews as well as non-Jews sought to adopt the Greek way of life and thought little of the Maccabees' attempts to preserve their ancient religion.

Hanukkah has been celebrated in different ways at different times. Almost since the beginning, the Menorah has been lit, but the manner of doing so has not always been the same. Formerly, eight candles were lit on the first day, seven on the second, and so on. Later, the progression was reversed. Designs have varied from an early circular lamp in the shape of a pointed star to one which, because it came from India, bore an oriental motif. A medieval lamp was unearthed in France and found to be inscribed: "For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching is light."

Hanukkah is a merry festival. Sephardic Jews hold special competitions and feasts for youth. Gifts of money are often given to youngsters. In communities where gambling was prohibited the ban was sometimes lifted on Hanukkah. Even today children play with a spinning top called a *dreydel* with which one wins prizes according to the way the top falls. The four letters on the sides of the top are thought by some to be the first letters of the Hebrew sentence meaning: "A great miracle happened there." In modern Israel, a runner carries a torch from Modin, birthplace of Mattathias and Judah, to Jerusalem. There it is used to kindle candelabra rescued from the Nazi holocaust.

Food often reflects the cuisine of the surrounding culture. Cheese dishes are popular perhaps because legend links them with Judith, who may have helped the cause of the Maccabees by plying Holefernes with dairy dishes before she slew him. Potato pancakes called *latkes* and doughs *(sufganiyyot)* are traditional for some.

Biblical authority is lacking for Hanukkah, but it is not necessary since Judaism is based upon oral law and tradition as well as on the Bible. Therefore, as the candles are lit, one praises God "Who commanded us to light the Hanukkah light." In synagogue the *al hanissim* prayer celebrates the delivery of "the many into the hands of the few,

the wicked into the hands of the righteous." Other blessings stress the universality of the meaning of Hanukkah. God has "performed miracles for our fathers in those days and at this time." And He "has kept us alive and brought us to this time." The rousing song "Ma'oz Zur" (which translates as "Fortress Rock") traces the victories of Israel over her oppressors from Pharaoh to Antiochus. Its tune is an old German one also used by Martin Luther for his hymn *Nun freut euch lieben Christen gmein.*

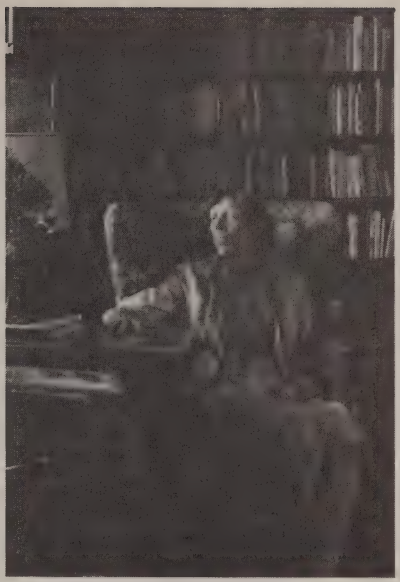
Hanukkah unlike, say, Rosh Hashonah, the New Year, is a secular holiday; that is, one on which work is not forbidden. And although each holiday is cherished for its unique significance, it is not among the most important of the Jewish festivals. It falls on the 25th of Kislev, which occurs on different dates in December each year since the Hebrew lunar and the Christian solar calendars do not coincide. Because of its proximity to Christmas, gaily-wrapped packages and greeting-cards have been added by many in order that the children of the house not be jealous of the Christmas of their Christian friends.

We, in my childhood, were not jealous. We did not crave the tinseled tree and the glittering ornaments because ours was a different identity. We held Hanukkah close to us, rejoicing in the warmth of the candles and the rhythms of the song, and our God, who, like our mother and father, was watching over us.

●

PRAISE TO GOD
by Mechtild of Magdeburg

O burning Mountain,
O chosen Sun,
O full Moon,
O fathomless Well,
O unreachable Height,
O Clarity beyond measure,
O Wisdom without ground,
O Mercy without hindrance,
O Strength without resistance,
O Crown of all glory,
The Lowest of Thy creatures sings
Thy praise.



CHRISTMAS IN CONNECTICUT

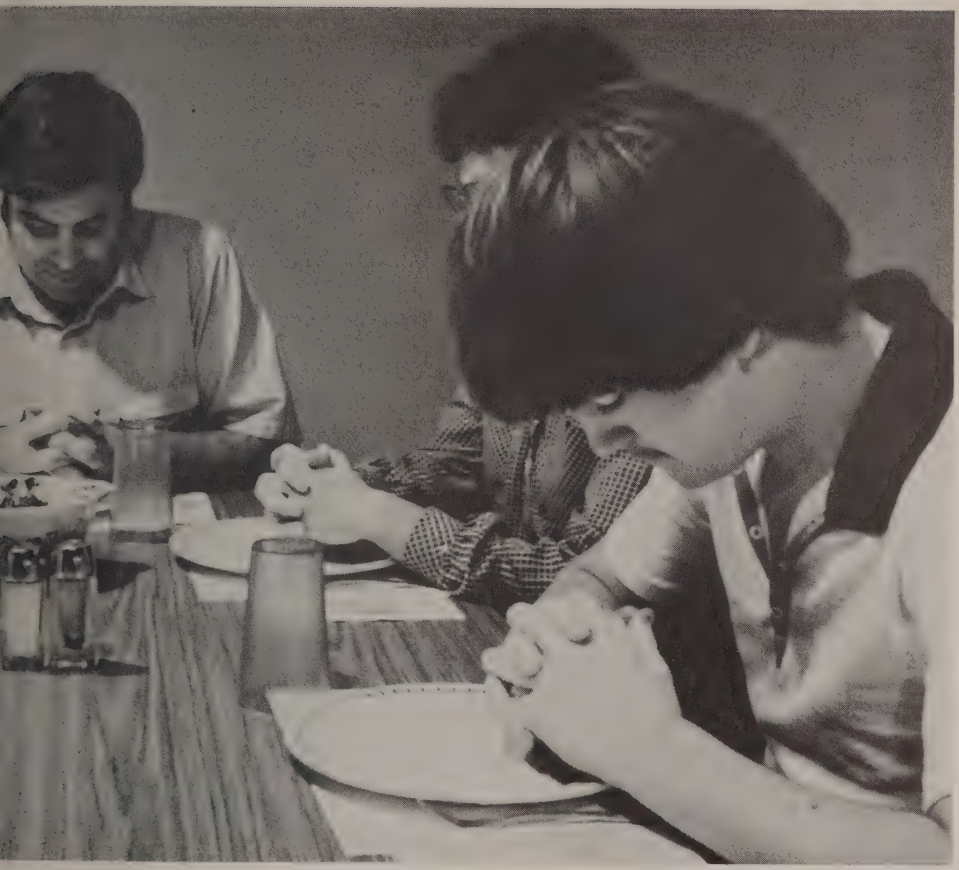
LAUREN FORD (1890-1973), who did the engraving on the cover called "The Blessing Of The Animals," was a popular artist as soon as she began to show her paintings. She painted mostly nativity scenes, with figures dressed in contemporary fashion, the landscape around them often that of her hometown of Bethlehem, Connecticut. A convert to Roman Catholicism, she had an exquisite private chapel in her home, where mass was often celebrated, and which in summer and winter was a gathering-place for artists and writers, intellectuals and religious leaders. Daughter of a writer and sister of a painter, she wrote a charming book entitled *The Little Book About God,* which can be found in the Frick Art Reference Library in New York City, and illustrated others' books too, including Clare Booth Luce's *Saints For Now.* Although she studied under George Bridgman and Frank V. du Mond, her style possessed great warmth of feeling which endowed her pictures with an almost primitive quality. Asked why she depicted Biblical scenes in her hometown, she replied, "I relate the Gospel to what I know."

—Joy Bergman

MY VISIT TO

FATHER EDWARD FLANAGAN, the founder of Boys Town, began his ministry working with the outcasts of society—drunks, derelicts, petty criminals. He took care of as many as five-hundred in a single day. It was frustrating work, and the results were dubious. Through his efforts with these seemingly hopeless transients, he came to the conclusion that if people could be helped before lifetime patterns were set, these problems would not exist. The proper focus, he believed, was children, the proper approach prevention.

Boys Town began in a small house in Omaha, Nebraska, on December 10, 1917, when Father Flanagan took in five boys. By Christmas there were twenty-five of them, by the end of January fifty.



BOYS TOWN

by BOB WAITE

They were orphans, wards of the court, delinquents, and homeless newsboys. Since then, 14,000 have gone through Boys Town. It is still governed by the assumption on which Father Flanagan built it, namely, in his words, that "there are no bad boys. There is only bad environment, bad training, bad example, bad thinking."

Though the concept remains the same, Boys Town itself has increased in size and scope. It is now an incorporated village. There is an outreach program making Boys Town a national entity. Also Boys Town has an Institute for Communication Disorders in Children (located next to St Joseph Hospital in Omaha), an inter-city school, and the Boys Town Center for the Study of Youth Development.

MY VISIT to Boys Town began with visions of Spencer Tracy and tough waifs wearing caps and knickers. Flying into Chicago, I visualized another era with newsboy orphans, streetwise but faithful priests and, for some unaccountable reason, a Dalmatian. On the way to Omaha, I thought of Christmas Seals and the slogan, "He ain't heavy, he's my brother." Driving from the Omaha airport down Dodge Road West, I was super-attentive for fear of passing Boys Town. The effort was unnecessary. A sign on the road said, "Welcome to Boys Town, pop. 500," and I was there.

I turned onto the main street, found the administration building, and realized the days of waify newsboys are gone, that Boys Town is in fact a town—a town with churches, schools, families—a town with everything, as its director Father Robert Hupp told me, but a jail.

The second blow to my preconceptions came when Father Hupp told me there were very few real orphans at Boys Town. "What we have here," said the Roman Catholic priest, "are what I refer to as social orphans." These, I found out, are children who for one reason or another got into trouble with their schools and or juvenile courts and generally came from problem-family environments. Father listed the kinds of children Boys Town doesn't take care of—those with severe emotional or mental problems, hard-core drug-addicts, and those who continually run away. He admits that a lot of the boys test the system and run away, but they usually stop when they realize no one is coming after them. There are no gates or bars or walls at Boys Town.

As a matter of fact, the idea is to replicate life as it is in society so that the boys can return as quickly as possible to their hometowns.

Father Hupp runs Boys Town in the tradition set by Father Flanagan. He mixes idealism and pragmatism in a way that inspires loyalty and tireless effort from his staff. Colleagues refer to his style as "tough love."

He impressed me with his ability to switch from happy childhood memories of his adopted brother Billy to strong attitudes toward permissiveness and the need for children to have a family and religious background.

Boys Town is built on a family-living concept, with family cottages housing no more than ten boys and a family-teacher couple whose fulltime job is to supply family life, guidance, and a spiritual outlook on life. Father Hupp puts it this way: "The age of permissiveness, with its loosely-knit approach to family life and religion, is responsible for creating the problems we deal with at Boys Town. We teach the boys the positive side of life; they've already seen the seamy side."

I was fortunate to have had the opportunity of visiting a Boys Town family. The street that led to the cottages looked like any street in suburban America. Children of all ages were visible, riding bicycles, carrying basketballs and footballs, just talking to neighbors in front of split-level houses.

The family I visited were the Lopes. Manuel and Mary Anne Lopes came to Boys Town on their way from a Marriage Encounter convention. They came with their own three children to see if there was a chance for them to serve as family-teachers. They were hired, went through an intensive training course, and now are the parents of thirteen, including their own.

When I entered the Lopes home, the boys were doing their chores. The boy who cooked the roast was being reassured that it had come out okay. Manuel was helping another with his homework, and Mary Anne sat down with me and talked. "I used to teach high school in California," she said. "This is much more satisfying."

Manuel joined us, and I was introduced to all the children.

The boys couldn't wait to show me the house. Their rooms looked like any teenagers' except much neater. There were posters on the walls, record collections, and sports equipment. One boy told me, "My family teachers are good ones. We are a happy family. They can be firm, but they're fair, and we love them very much!"

Later, Tom Schuyler, a good-natured publicity-man, took me to where I would be spending the night—the Boys Town Center for the Study of Youth Development. This ultra-modern research center brings psychologists and social scientists from all over the world to study the problems and development of children and adolescents. The night I was there, a seminar on drugs was being given. Mrs. Lopes attended it, and I bought a T-shirt with "Keep Off the Grass" written across the front.

The next morning I rode around Boys Town and watched the children going to school. I was caught up in the enthusiasm of this special mid-western community. I was excited to see the bustle of morning—anxious to see the inter-city program and the Boys Town Institute in Omaha. Omaha was more spacious and more spread out than the eastern cities I am accustomed to.

The Boys Town Institute for Communication Disorders is for the diagnosis, study, and in some cases treatment of learning disorders. In a sense it is a children's hospital, but not like any I've ever seen. It was built with the children in mind. There were "wombdows"—specially constructed bubble-shaped windows that children could sit in—and game-rooms, mazes, and child-sized furniture. Father Hupp explained: "Some problem children are problems only because of a hearing difficulty or some other learning disability. Once that's solved, they are alright."

The last place I went to was the Urban Program. There I saw tough city-kids getting schooling and counseling. Tom Schuyler told me the teachers there have the lowest turnover in the city of Omaha.

As I left Boys Town, I was convinced of Father Flanagan's saying: "There are no bad boys. There is only bad environment, bad training, bad example, bad thinking."

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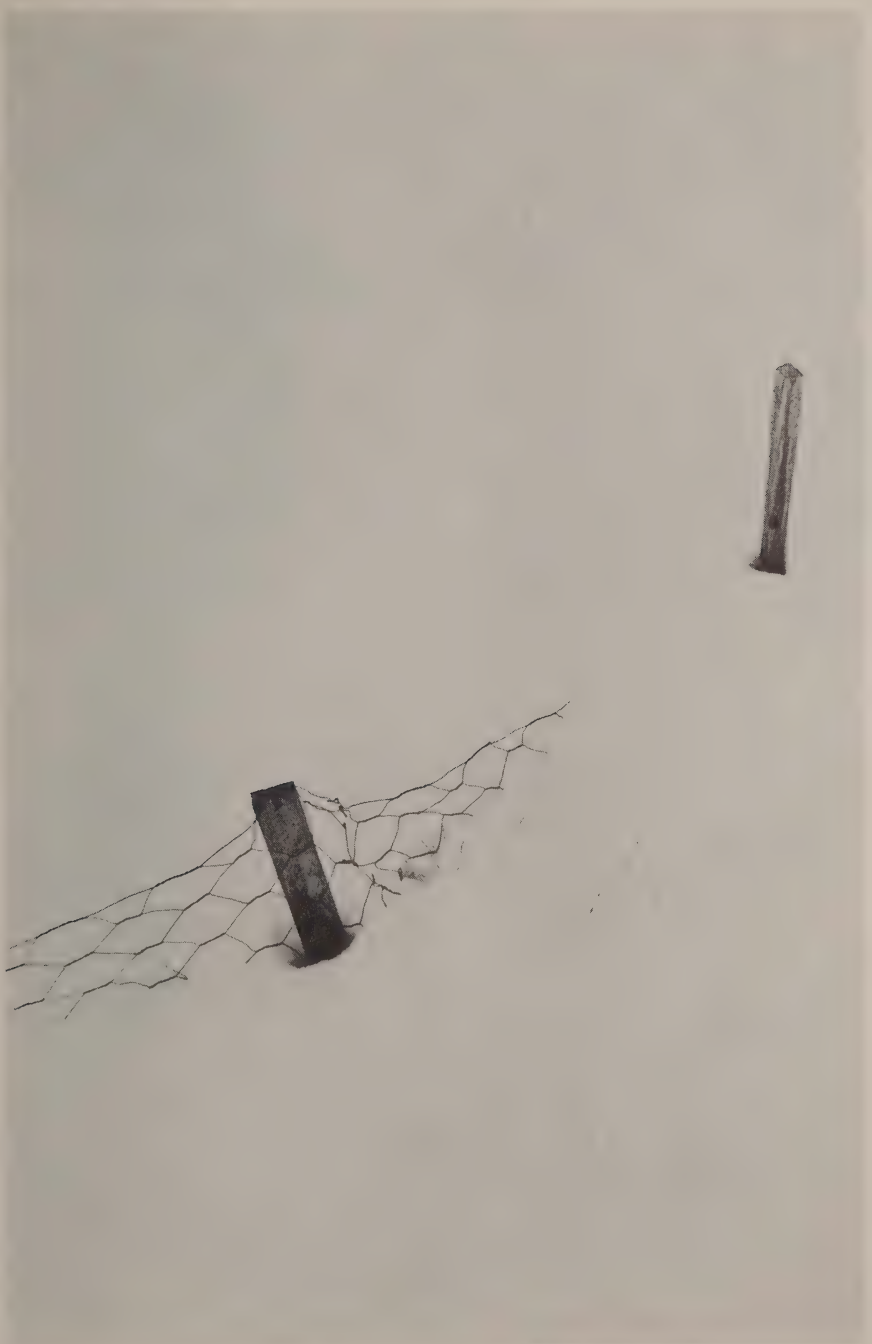
WINTER GARDEN

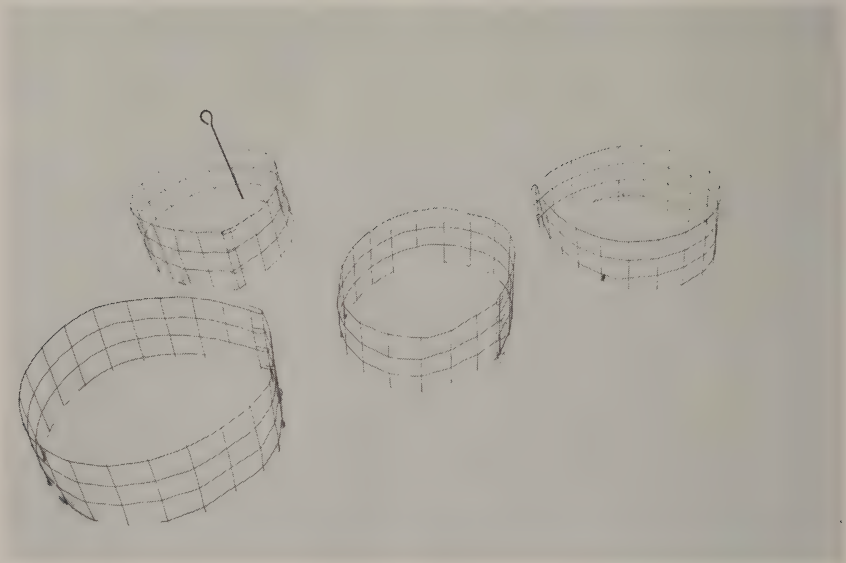
Photo-Essay by Tom Dunham

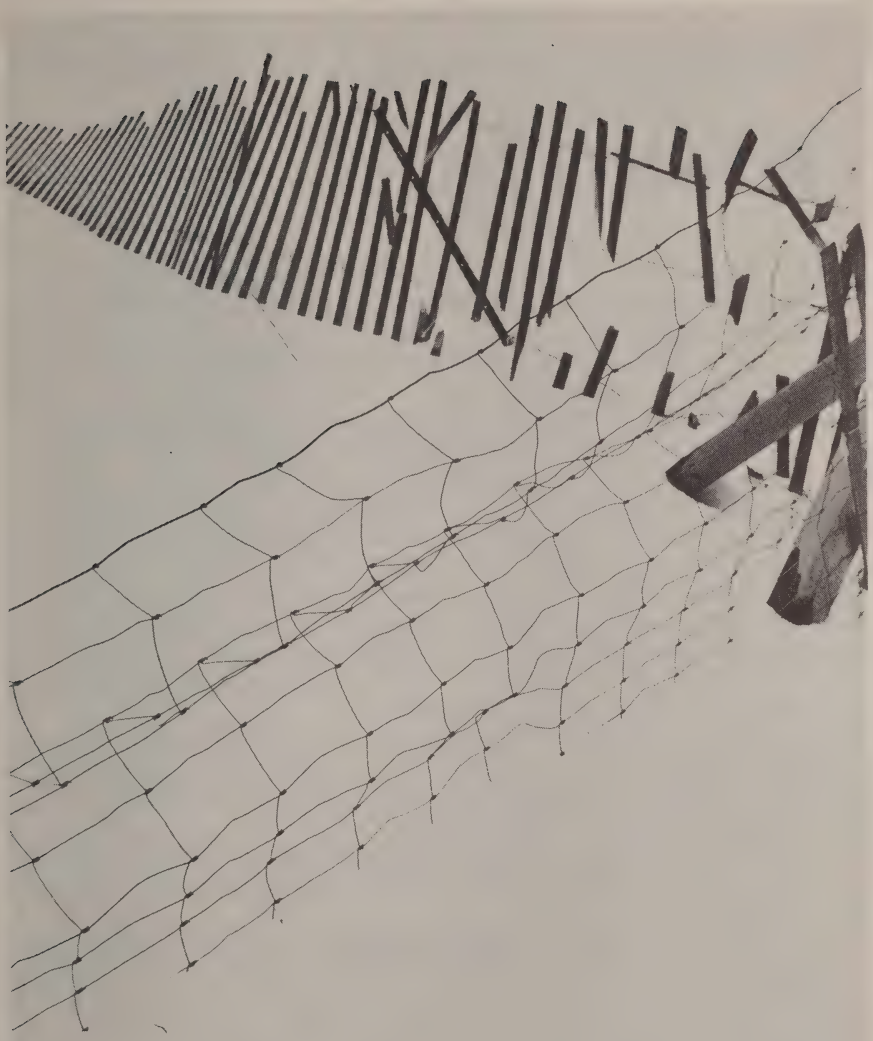
Odd, that winter
Be a season of
Revelation.

To think a blanket of snow or
Layers of clothes should reveal
True form and character.

There are no frills
During winter,
And structure
And spirit
Are put to the test.







BEING NOW

IT is obvious that an eagle's potential will be actualized in roaming the sky, diving down on smaller animals for food, and in building nests.

It is obvious that an elephant's potential will be actualized in size, power and clumsiness.

No eagle will want to be an elephant, no elephant to be an eagle. They "accept" themselves; they accept their "selves." No, they don't even accept themselves; for this would mean possible rejection. They take themselves for granted. No, they don't even taken themselves for granted, for this would imply a possibility of otherness. They just are. They are what they are.

How absurd it would be if they, like humans, had fantasies, dissatisfactions, and self-deceptions! How absurd it would be if the elephant, tired of walking the earth, wanted to fly, eat rabbits, and lay eggs. And the eagle wanted to have the strength and thick skin of the beast.

Leave this to the human—to try to be something he is not—to have ideals that cannot be reached, to be cursed with perfectionism so as to be safe from criticism, and to open the road to unending mental torture.

Friend, don't be a perfectionist. Perfectionism is a curse and a strain. For you tremble lest you miss the bulls-eye. You are perfect if you let be.

Friend, don't be afraid of mistakes. Mistakes are not sins. Mistakes are ways of doing something different, perhaps creatively new.

Friend, don't be sorry for your mistakes. Be glad for them. You had the courage to give something of yourself.

It takes years to be centered; it takes more years to understand and to be *now*.

From GESTALT IS by Fritz Perls

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INCENSE AS A PRAYER-OFFERING IN CHINESE RELIGIONS

by RAOUL OYANG BIRNBAUM

THERE IS a fragrance associated with Chinese religious practices, an agreeable odor that comes to mind whenever one thinks of a Chinese temple: the pungent, smoky smell of burning incense. The use of incense as a prayer-offering is a basic feature of Buddhist, Taoist, Confucian, and traditional folk practices. If a worshipper in a Chinese temple or wayside shrine does nothing else, he will burn a stick of incense in homage to the spirit or deity honored there.

Incense may be used to calm the mind during meditation. (In Buddhist practices, the duration of a meditation session lasts until the stick of incense has burned to the end.) Incense may be used to invoke divine forces and thus drive away malicious spirits at well-known danger places or even on a darkened stairway. Burning it may be an act of homage or a visible means of conveying hopes, aspirations, and pleas to invisible realms.

The use of incense and other fragrant substances as prayer-offerings has a long-standing tradition in China. While it is difficult to trace these practices in most ancient times, it appears that many of the basic rites of state religion included the solemn offering of fragrant foods and wines. These foods, many prepared hot and steaming, were offered to deities such as Shangti (Lord-on-High) in special bronze vessels placed upon an altar.

Food, of course, is not incense. Yet there is a similarity, for fragrant steam rises just like smoke, and it disappears into the air. Its absorption and disappearance are genuine mysteries to any intent observer (though nowadays we can speak scientifically of the dispersion of molecules). In religious ritual, the point where steam or smoke rises and disappears can be perceived as a meeting of the spiritual and earthly realms.

The first use of smoke-producing substances, the precursors of incense, seems to have been confined to non-religious spheres in ancient China. Texts from the seventh to second centuries B.C. mention such practices as fumigating houses with the smoke of burning medicinal herbs to combat disease, smoking out rats with noxious fumes, dispelling insects (especially, in later times, the bookworms in scholars' libraries), creating toxic smoke and smokescreens for mil-

itary purposes.

When China made trade contact with Western countries such as Persia, India, and Rome around 100 B.C., exotic fragrant herbs, oils, and woods began to be imported. It was at this time, apparently, that the burning of actual incense took on ritual use in China. A new type of vessel—called "vast mountain incense-burner"—was created for these imported substances. The vessel was shaped like a sacred mountain rising out of cosmic waters. Incense was burned in the hollow center of the mountain. The smoke rose out of holes cunningly concealed in the peaks and valleys, wafting out like misty mountain-breath. (The early Chinese believed that certain great mountains were divine, their breath—rainclouds—nourishing the earth and all its creatures.)

Under the influence of the many foreigners coming into China around this time, especially Indian and central Asian Buddhist monks, the practice of burning incense was integrated into Chinese religious rites. While offerings at Indian rites included all manner of items—flowers, fruits, lamps, scented oils, and incense—the Chinese were especially intrigued by incense and elevated it to a supreme position in their rites.

They took the classic sacred form of the tripod cauldron and made it the basic form for massive temple incense-burners. Taoist rites commonly begin and end at a great censer with offerings of incense to the deities. In Buddhist services, incense hymns are chanted. These hymns, with many elegant turns of phrase in an elevated form of language, are sometimes chanted by the leader, sometimes by the entire group. The melody is quite distinct from the rather monotonous Indian-inspired chanting of scriptures and invocatory formulae. It is sonorous, with syllables drawn out to awesome lengths, stretching time in a peaceful billowing way as the smoke of the incense rises out of the urn.

Sticks are the most familiar form of incense used in Chinese practice. In Chinese temples one often sees a worshipper enter, light an entire bundle of sticks, bow before the images on the altar, and plant the burning sticks in the urn. Sometimes powdered incense is used, arranged on a flat bed of fine ash to form a potent Chinese word such as *fu* (blessing) or *shou* (longevity). As the powder burns, the smoke rising from it forms the shape of the word. From the beams of some temples great coils are suspended cone-like giant versions of our mosquito coils. The coils burn for hours, emitting little fragrance but giving off clouds of acrid smoke.

While the use of incense is an important custom in Chinese religious rites, it is used among diverse groups around the world, ranging from American Indians, who burn juniper, spruce, and other fragrant woods for purification, to Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and other Christian churches in which swinging censers are familiar features of solemn masses.

A HISTORY OF NIGHT

by JORGE LUIS BORGES

Through the course of generations
men brought the night into being.
In the beginning were blindness and dream
and thorns which gash the bare foot
and fear of wolves.
We shall never know who fashioned the word
for the interval of darkness
which divides the two half-lights.
We shall never know in what century it stood
for the starry spaces.
Others began the myth.
They made night mother of the tranquil Fates
who weave destiny
and sacrificed black sheep to her
and the rooster which announced her end.
The Chaldeans gave her twelve houses;
infinite worlds, the Stoic Portico.
Latin hexameters molded her,
and Pascal's dread.
Luis de Leon saw in her the homeland
of his shivering soul.
Now we feel her inexhaustible
as an old wine
and no one can think of her without vertigo,
and time has charged her with eternity.
And to think that night would not exist
without those tenuous instruments, the eyes.

Translated by Alastair Reid
published by his permission

(continued from page 8)

Resurrection. It is the form that is crucified on the cross. The spirit is liberated from its restricted house of clay. Purification leads to renunciation, renunciation to crucifixion, and crucifixion to resurrection. Such is the necessary sequence in the evolution of the soul.

Raising the dead is a phrase that has symbolic significance. The celestial man chained in the flesh can be resurrected, but this liberation can only come about by the crucifixion of the ego-centered self.

The Via Dolorosa emphasizes the sorrows and tribulations of the struggle, but too little is said about the glory of the end. Crucifixion is but a scene in a much larger drama.

In the long-distant past, Adam and Eve, ignorant of good and evil, are driven from the Garden of Eden. For aeons they wander in this time-space continuum, gathering experience. Now they grope uncertainly in the dark byways of evil; now they move onward to the radiant source of light. Slowly the dew of wisdom seeps into their minds. They commit themselves irrevocably to the good and the true and suffer for making such a choice. They carry their crosses onward, weighed down by their burden. Even to the point of crucifixion do they remain steadfast. Then, encircled by light, they return to the place from which they started—the paradise where unity swallows up all duality. There they are united with "the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." The age-long journey is over, the pilgrim has returned from his incredible pilgrimage—ready to undertake new quests in the ever-unfolding cosmic drama. It is a stupendous saga that the imagination conceives with difficulty.

The doom pronounced in Genesis leads at long last to entrance into the City of Inner Light in Revelations. "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread" is the decree at the beginning, but at the end, "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes" and "I will give thee a crown for life."

The Art of Overcoming

The path of the striving soul is beset by trials and testings that demand discriminations, realizations, renunciations, and wise choices. There is compensation, however, for those who meet their varied challenges with wisdom. "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God." And again, to the warrior that overcometh, "I will give him the morning star, and make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out.

Surmounting the presented obstacles as a warrior vanquishes his enemies is a matter of fateful importance. The hinge of destiny nests on such inner battles. But what is it that must be overcome? Jesus

declares, "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

The forces arrayed against the soul faithful to the higher vision are formidable. It is natural to pursue pleasure, reach greedily for power, and accumulate possessions, but such activities must be curbed lest they become soul-destroying. "Be not conformed to this world." Values based on the lower inclinations of the natural man are unwise and self-aggrandizing. "The friendship of the world is enmity with God."

Overcoming involves a recognition of the difference between right and wrong and an unswerving holding "fast to that which is good." St Paul admonishes, "In everything give thanks." Elaborating on this theme, we may say, "Give thanks for the precious gift of life, for the sufferings that temper the spirit, for the hardships, failures, and frustrations that attune one to the pitch of the soul." St Paul counsels, "Quench not the spirit; pray without ceasing; rejoice evermore." Look not for the harvest at the time of sowing. "Let us not be weary in well doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." Such principles are lamps on the noble path of overcoming.

Prayer is presented as an important technique in making the lower nature responsive to the higher will. In only too many instances "the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." In Revelations, the elders about the throne have "golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of saints." It would seem that the aspirations of suppliants create an essence that is of universal benefit.

Wisdom of the Serpent

To knit all relations in the golden bonds of love is the fulfillment of the law. "He that loveth not," says John, "knoweth not God; for God is love." And yet the same disciple roundly asserts, "The whole world lieth in wickedness." In such an atmosphere, how shall the earnest disciple learn the art of cleaving to good in the midst of evil?

When Jesus tells his disciples to go forth and preach, he offers unusual counsel. "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves; be ye therefore wise as serpents and harmless as doves." Most people do not bear the wolfish image. In fact, they appear to be normal in behavior, rational in manner, and natural in their responses. However, when conduct is governed by purely emotional preferences, the resulting actions are unpredictable, and when the will is directed to the glorification of personality egotism, behaviour patterns can be undesirably self-exalting. False prophets are harshly characterized. "Inwardly they are ravening wolves." So it is that Jesus utters a warning. "Beware of men; for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues."

The serpent hides and moves forward indirectly, going first to one side and then to the other. It has a forked tongue, symbolic of its ability to use dualism for its own purposes. Occasionally it hisses to discour-

age enemies. The disciple might study with profit such patterns of response. The dove, by its harmlessness, suggests understanding, tolerance, and equanimity.

That All Might Be One

Human beings may be considered as vessels into which the One Life is poured. As individuals, they are markedly different; yet the animating essence is the same. On the plane of duality, they are strongly conscious of their diversity, but at a higher level of comprehension, they may glimpse their unity.

The vision of oneness is strongly emphasized by Jesus in the seventeenth chapter of St. John. "Neither pray I for these (disciples) alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us."

The petals of a rose are separate and distinct, but they are all parts of the same flower. Two perspectives are thus suggested. One concerns the various petals, the other the wholeness of the rose. The vision of differences contrasts strongly with that of unity.

Christianity, although the emanating source is single, has been broken up into fragments. This condition arises from the vision of differences. The founder, however, proclaimed a doctrine of unity. In our time, the ecumenical movement has sought to renew this unitive vision. In love, separation is negated; hence the injunction, "Love one another."

The One, moving outward, becomes the many. The many, returning to the Source, become the One. The pilgrim, having wandered far on this plane of differentiation, sets his face in the direction of the unity from which he sprang.

Relationships

by MARGARET T. SCHRAER

Let me tune the heartstrings
mute the harsh notes
take time to listen
to listen with more care
to be more aware
of needs of others.
Let me take time
to respond with empathy and love.

Once Upon A Christmas Card

by Jim Panos

THE TRAIN labored through the cold Canadian night. My wife and I had completed a sad family mission in Montreal and decided to wind it up with a weekend in Ste. Adele, in the Laurentians. The train had seen better days. It was tubular and long, like an upholstered cylinder, with two endless rows of bench seats. It was dimly lit, if not quite with gas lamps, with bulbs not far evolved from the model Thomas Edison had invented. The windows were permanently pock-marked, reflecting the grim ambience of the coach. By the time the train lurched to a stop at Ste. Adele, we had all but regretted our decision to come.

I remembered Ste. Adele as a colorful French Canadian village, nestled in the Laurentian hills. Now, as we stepped off the train, it sat on its deep snows — and sparkled. It was the first weekend in January, and the countryside was ablaze with Christmas lights. From the grimness of the train, we had stumbled into Fairyland.

For a lark, we took a sleigh instead of a taxi to our hotel, the Ste. Adele Lodge. The driver tucked us under several layers of blankets in the cab of his sleigh and took his seat up front, urging his horse on in a language only he and it understood. We glided past houses and stores glittering with colored lights and under garlands of yuletide decorations bridging the tiny streets.

Ste. Adele is divided into two parts, Ste. Adele-en-bas, which is the location for the railroad station and its business community, and Ste. Adele-en-haut, higher up, where the residential and resort areas are located. The two are joined by a steep hill, which our sleigh was now negotiating. Our horse lived up to its task splendidly, pulling the sleigh at a fair clip. The dull clop-clop of its hooves on the padded snow and the tinkling of its bells announced our progress through the village, as it followed its breath up to the perch of the Ste. Adele Lodge.

Yes, Fairyland.

We bundled up and went out for a walk. It was a cold, clear night. The air was fine and rare. The light of the moon, reflected in the bright snow, turned night into day. We could see for miles. Every tree was a Christmas tree, hung heavy with snow. High up on a nearby hill, a huge cross, brilliantly lit, looked serenely down on the Catholic village.

Then, somewhere, church bells rang out, like echoes of themselves in the still night, summoning the pious to evening prayer. We walked briskly in that silent, enchanted countryside, feeling as if we had crossed into a live Christmas card.

That was almost a quarter of a century ago.

Yet, it's with us still.

Each year, as we grudgingly tackle our Christmas card list, the memory of that moment in the Laurentian hills returns to haunt us. We see ourselves in every card we write. Somehow, that brightens our task. And, thankfully, it takes some of the routine out of the holiday season.

BOOKS

Turning East by Harvey Cox *(Simon & Schuster, $9.95)* tells of the author's encounters with westernized versions of Eastern spirituality. He "sits" with Zen practitioners, studies and teaches at the Naropa Institute, uses peyote with Mexican Indians, and draws conclusions of theological and sociological significance. His conclusions, and his ways of arriving at them, make this book a serious effort by a Christian to come to terms with the new orientalism and to better understand his own faith in light of the teachings of the East.

Cox's keen theological understanding makes clear the difference between what the great Asian paths really have to offer and the mythicized western versions of their teachings and practices. Something happens when the "light from the East" is filtered through the "prism" of modern Western culture which "transforms rubies and emeralds into plastic, the sacred into the silly, the holy in the hokey." This happens partially because everything in our culture somehow becomes an object of consumption, including experience. Pop psychology and spiritual gluttony conspire to strip the great Asian spiritual traditions of their meaning and reduce them to ways of escaping the realities of suffering and of our times. Therefore, the Eastern traditions which lead people away from self-concern and teach that ego is an illusion are filtered through the "prism" of ego-serving therapeutics. The solution is not to intensify the "light from the East" but to "dismantle the prism."

Cox's reflections are not all negative. His view of the East-turners is sympathetic. His journey into meditative practices led him to a better understanding of the Sabbath. After spending a Sabbath with an Orthodox Jewish rabbi, he noted, "I had learned what it means to be a Christian who practices a 'Buddhist' form of meditation —from the Jews."

More than anything *Turning East* is about Christianity. It challenges contemporary Christians to be contemporary and to concern themselves with the first generation of Christians as a model "not of what to do but how to do it." To Cox it is essential for the Christian to operate in the secular because "to encounter the holy today one must move deeper into the 'godless' world, not away from it." —B.W.

Paul Clasper brings to the reader intimate knowledge of Eastern religion as a missionary in Burma and currently as lecturer in theology and Asian religions at the University of Hong Kong. **Eastern Paths and The Christian Way** *(Orbis Books, $5.95)* is not only about Christianity's encounter with the East but is also a model for interfaith interaction.

It is written to Christians and begins with an invocation of Justin

Martyr, who prior to his conversion wore the blue robe of the teacher of Greek philosophy. After conversion, he continued to wear the robe, choosing not to discard what he had learned from previous paths. Justin's belief was "next to God, we worship and love the *Logos*. . . ."

The ease of its style and its nonchauvinistic objectivity make the book good reading for those wishing to understand Eastern religions from a Christian perspective and for those who wish to understand them in and of themselves. —B.W.

Why certain books make particularly vivid impressions at certain times is a puzzle probably having more to do with sociology than literature. The most recent phenomenon to garner such attention is a work of high scholarship by a young Yale professor named John Boswell. In this instance, the quality of the work doubtless explains its remarkable success in quarters beyond the ordinary audience for historical research. **Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality** *(University of Chicago Press, $27.50)* is full of almost countless facts previously unnoticed, and offers many insights hitherto unavailable, which spill over into footnotes that even non-specialists will not want to skim over. A study of "gay people in western Europe from the beginning of the Christian era to the fourteenth century," it demolishes claims made against the Bible as the source for persecution of homosexuals (and Jews, Muslims, and gypsies). Or its success may stem from its twin subjects—intolerance being one of the great and pressing facts of our notorious century, homosexuality being one of the most recurrent themes of its literature from James and Proust to Colette, Lawrence, Woolf, and Carson McCullers. —P.G.

Jesus, Politics, and Society by Richard J. Cassidy *(Orbis Books, $7.95)* is a study of the Gospel of Luke using the techniques of modern Biblical scholarship. Luke is characterized as an Empire historian and theologian. Much of the argument centers around such issues in Biblical criticism as Luke's accuracy as a historian and his specific intentions as a theologian in terms of the early church. The book has a limited scope, asking, "What kind of social and political stance does Luke attribute to Jesus?" In these terms, it seems to be for scholars rather than lay readers.

This is not the case when the book is read in light of the overall stance attributed to Jesus. The radical nature of his message and its consequences to the Roman political order concerning the status of women, the rich, the poor, lead Cassidy to conclude that Jesus "rejects the violence and exploitation that they (the Romans) accept as a normal part of living, and his teachings and conduct run counter to many of the other patterns they accept and endorse." The tone of the book indicates that Jesus's message runs also against the grain of current social practices. —B.W.

LETTERS

Dear Sir:

I was raised in a very religious family. We did a lot of praying, but I do not remember many solutions manifesting comparatively. Here is a simple process by which you can learn not only what percentage of your prayers manifest but also how long it takes for various kinds of problems.

Briefly write out your prayer. Pray each day for the same solution. Record the day you started to pray about each specific problem and also record the day a solution manifested. Keep this record for future reference.

Recording your successes gives you great confidence in your ability to manifest solutions. I found I lost a lot of stress—anxiety, frustration, hopelessness—when I first realized I could manifest solutions to my problems. Before, I would get very discouraged. Now there is a great difference.

Sincerely yours,
Daniel Schaefer, *San Pedro, Calif.*

•

Fellowship in Prayer
20 Nassau Street, Suite 250 East
Princeton, New Jersey 08540

Date _____

I enclose $_____ as a donation to FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER for the bimonthly publication. ($5.00 covers the cost of printing, handling, and mailing for one year. Larger donations cover the cost of copies given to persons unable to make a donation.)

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NOTICES & COMMENTS

WE EXPRESS our regrets over the death of Neil Mellblom, editor of Fellowship in Prayer from February, 1964 to January, 1967. Kathryn Brown, President of FIP, remembers him "as a man who was deeply interested in the fellowship and a hard-working editor." Neil Mellblom was the Protestant editor of Religious News Service. He left FIP to work in Geneva Switzerland, as the English press officer for the Lutheran World Federation. Upon leaving, he assured FIP, "I am not breaking the tie with the fellowship, because it is too strong ever to break." He continued on as an advisor and friend to the fellowship. He came back to the United States in 1976 and worked for the Lutheran Council in New York until his death last July 7th. His career reflected the dignity of a man committed to service.

THE DEATH of The Reverend Robert L. Councilman, in September, robs Fellowship in Prayer of a highly prized friend and counselor. "Bob was brought up in Burlington, North Carolina, attended—among other schools—Wake Forest University and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, and served eight pastorates in North Carolina until his retirement in 1969. After that, he stayed busy with pastoral counseling, interdenominational communication and action, and for a year along with his wife Emily served on the Fellowship's Board of Trustees. Always active in interfaith movements, he maintained, first of all, the approach of genuine concern and love for all people as individuals. To us he gave a fatherly kindness and wisdom on which we always relied and often drew.

The Reverend Robert Councilman and his wife Emily (center) welcomed FIP President Kathryn G. Brown to North Carolina during 1960's visit.

Forms of Meditation and Samadhi

Disease, mental laziness, doubt, lack of enthusiasm, lethargy, clinging to sense-enjoyments, false perception, non-attaining concentration, and falling away from the state when obtained, are the obstructing distractions.

Grief, mental distress, tremor of the body, irregular breathing, accompany non-retention of concentration.

To remedy this, the practice of one subject should be made. . . .

By throwing out and restraining the breath.

Those forms of concentration that bring extraordinary sense-perceptions cause perseverance of the mind.

Or (by the meditation on) the Effulgent Light, which is beyond all sorrow.

Or (by meditation on) the heart that has given up all attachment to sense-objects.

Or by meditating on the knowledge that comes in sleep.

Or by the meditation on anything that appeals to one as good.

The Yogi's mind thus meditating, becomes unobstructed from the atomic to the infinite.

(From THE YOGA APHORISMS OF PATANJALI
Translated by Swami Vivekananda)

ASK

If
a prayer
is needed for someone
or for yourself,
let us know.

Write
or phone: (609) 924-0880

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20 Nassau Street, Suite 250 East
Princeton, New Jersey 08540
(609) 924-0880

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Suggested BOOKS

Following are some of the books which have been used in the preparation of this issue:

ON BEING A CHRISTIAN by Hans Kung, Doubleday & Company, Publishers, New York.

GESTALT IS by Fritz Perls, Real People Press, Utah.

THE WISDOM OF CHINA AND INDIA. Edited by Lin Yutang, Random House, New York.

IN THE QUIET NIGHT

by LI PO

So bright a gleam on the foot of my bed—
Could there have been a frost already?
Lifting myself to look, I found that it was moonlight.
Sinking back again, I thought suddenly of home.

Translated by Witter Bynner

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